



Front Country Trails
Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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Regular Meeting
Saturday, November 17, 2007
9:00 a.m.
Louise Lowry Davis Center
1232 De la Vina St., Santa Barbara

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Forsell called the special meeting of the Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force to order at 9:05 a.m. at the Louise Lowry Davis Center.

ROLL CALL: Task Force Members Present:

Steve Forsell	City Park & Recreation Commissioner
Beebe Longstreet	City Park & Recreation Commissioner
Suzanne Perkins	County Parks Commissioner 1st District
James Hickling	County Parks Commissioner 3rd District
Bruce Emmens	Public Use & Facilities Staff Officer Los Padres National Forest
Jeff Bensen	District Recreation Officer Los Padres National Forest

Task Force Members Absent:

None

City of Santa Barbara Staff Present

Nancy Rapp	Parks and Recreation Director
Jill Zachary	Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
Kathy Frye	Associate Park/Natural Areas Planner
Terri Yamada	Administrative Assistant

County of Santa Barbara Staff Present

Erik Axelson	Deputy Parks Director
Claude A. Garciacelay	ASLA, Park Planner

Los Padres National Forest Staff Present

Kerry Kellogg	Recreation Specialist, Santa Barbara Ranger District
Kyle Kinports	Assistant Recreation Officer, Santa Barbara Ranger District

National Park Service Staff Present
Melanie Beck, Outdoor Recreation Planner

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA – None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Speakers:

- Members of the Public: Stephen Dougherty

1. Approval of Minutes

Recommendation: That the FCT Multi-jurisdictional Task Force waive the reading and approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 3, 2007.

Motion:

Task Force Members Hickling/Emmens that the Task Force approve the minutes of the regular meetings of October 3, 2007.

Vote:

5/0/1, Longstreet abstained.

2. Agency Coordination and Multi-Use Trails of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area – For Information

Recommendation: That the FCT Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receive a presentation from Melanie Beck of the National Park Service, on agency coordination and trails management of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Documents:

- PowerPoint Presentation

Speakers:

- Melanie Beck, Recreation Specialist, Santa Barbara Ranger District

Task Force Comments:

- Task Force Member Forsell inquired about commercial operations for downhill bike riding, and whether it is allowed, and if so, how it is regulated. Ms. Beck replied that the only mountain bike operations allowed are sanctioned groups, i.e. the mountain bike unit and groups coming in to teach children. Commercial operations would not be consistent with their mission. Task Force Member Forsell then asked if commercial operations are prohibited. Ms. Beck replied that if it is determined that the use is unsafe, for example Adventure riding, then yes, it would be prohibited.
- Task Force Member Perkins stated that the Santa Monica trails don't have the same make-up as other areas, i.e. paved roads where vans can drive to take the bikes up the hill.

- Task Force Member Hickling asked how decisions are made on which trails are multi-use and which trails are for hiking. Ms. Beck replied that factors include narrowness, steepness, boulders, steep side slopes (and that round a corner), width, and vegetation near trails. Ms. Beck added that new trails have been built to multiple use standards.
- Task Force Member Emmens asked if it would take the completion of the Trail Management Plan and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIR) with recommendations, before any rule promulgation. Ms. Beck replied yes.
- Task Force Member Forsell asked if there are any fines, sanctions or penalties for excessive speed, or inappropriate use on trails. Ms. Beck replied that she would research and send any information she finds to Kathy Frye.
- Task Force Member Forsell asked if repeat offenders or repeat cite receivers are banned from using the trails. Ms. Beck replied that it is difficult to track or monitor repeat offenders, however the licensing of bikes has been discussed.
- Task Force Member Bensen asked if mounted patrols patrol the multi-use trails. Ms. Beck replied yes.

3. Draft Recommendations for the Front Country Trails – For Discussion

Recommendation: That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force (Task Force) receive a presentation and discuss draft recommendations for the management of the Santa Barbara front country trail system.

Documents:

- Staff Report
- Staff PowerPoint Presentation

Speakers:

- Staff: Jill Zachary, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director

I. ADMINISTRATION/ORGANIZATION

Recommendations:

1. Develop an interagency (City/County/Forest Service) Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) for trail management, maintenance and funding.
2. Develop a multi-agency Front Country Trails Strategy/Management Plan.
3. Develop a funding plan to address trails planning and maintenance, capital projects, enforcement, and education and outreach.
4. Establish an inter-agency FCT Coordinator staff position.
5. Foster development of an umbrella non-profit community organization to assist with trail maintenance, education, fund raising, and community support.

Task Force Comments:

- Task Force Member Forsell said that in the future, people may need to lobby elected representatives for funding.
- Task Force Member Hickling asked whether the U.S. Forest Service would approve a new staff member. Since the USFS funds all go into one pot, perhaps it might be better to look at a County position.
- Task Force Member Bensen felt that the recommendations should be more general and not state one specific agency for a staff person. The MOU should address the funding issue. Staff have summarized very quickly what the Task Force has been discussing over the past nine months.
- Task Force Member Perkins felt that it is critical that all those present at today's meeting call, write, email Lois Capps, Congresswoman regarding funding. Elected officials need to hear from their constituents.
- Task Force Member Longstreet asked if the staff position could be housed in an umbrella non-profit agency. Ms. Zachary replied yes.
- Task Force Member Emmens asked if an agreement to fund a position under the umbrella would be included in the Interagency MOU or would a separate MOU be developed? Ms. Zachary answered that while still conceptual at this time, staff could explore a subsequent MOU with a non-governmental agency.

II. COMMUNITY OUTREACH/EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Recommendations:

1. Re-implement education efforts, including trail signage, trail hosts, and other sources of information.
2. Develop interim voluntary trail use guidelines.
3. Build broader community support for the FCT by working with trail user groups to sponsor quarterly events/work days and an annual event to recognize volunteers and collaborative partnerships, among others.

Task Force Comments:

- Task Force Member Bensen suggested developing recommendations 1 and 2 together.
- Task Force Member Longstreet felt that a lot of support can fall under this category, i.e. websites, Government Access Channel 18, press releases, etc.
- Task Force Member Perkins added that the Montecito Trails Foundation has a very good working relationship with County Parks staff.
- Task Force Member Hickling felt the recommendations are logical.

TRAIL MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Recommendations:

1. Conduct an assessment of existing trail conditions and use.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of developing a trail classification system and trail standards that are appropriate to Santa Barbara's front country.
3. Explore developing consistent standards for trails planning, policy, permits and regulations.
4. Explore Pilot Program with Trail Use Designation

Task Force Comments:

- Task Force Member Emmens stated that the LPNF policy on trail use is the opposite of the Park Service. Under LPNF policy, roads are open to bikes unless designated closed.
- Task Force Member Longstreet stated that the trail assessment should be conducted by a neutral party, then the decision making process can occur using objective criteria. This way, a higher level of trust can be built upon, and staff can move forward with policies that make sense, built on fact.
- Task Force Member Hickling stated that he concurs with Task Force Member Longstreet. He added that an EIR isn't needed to come up with trails designation. Trails can be designated based on criteria developed without an EIR.
- Task Force Member Perkins added that adding new trails and trail corridors is very complex. For the County, it involves updating the PRT map, part of the general plan. This type of updates takes years. Additionally, Ms. Perkins added that she did not think the 1st District has addressed multi-use trails since at least the 1980's.
- Task Force Member Forsell added that a non-ambiguous trail rating system is needed in order to get to our goal. He asked about the "UTAP" system used in the Santa Monica mountains for evaluation of trails, and, suggested it be considered.

Speakers:

- Members of the public: Jim Childress, Chris Orr, Dorothy Littlejohn, Kevin and Sheila Snow

Task Force Comments:

- Task Force Member Forsell suggested that if staff feels it would be useful to meet with various user groups, they should do so.
- Task Force Member Perkins felt that the various user groups have been very articulate thus far on their respective arenas and direction they wish to go.
- Task Force Member Longstreet concurred with Ms. Perkins and felt that the Task Force should move forward and bring recommendations to a public hearing.

- Task Force Member Hickling requested a matrix of staff recommendations. He added that he would like to take action at the February meeting.
- Task Force Member Perkins commented that staff has done a great job. She felt that a multi-jurisdictional MOU with just the 3 entities is needed (City/County/Forest Service without non-profits or volunteer groups). She suggests moving forward with the staff position (not a non-profit staff person), and would like to see a trails standard to help classify trails, i.e. a rating system. This standard needs to incorporate criteria for resource protection, public safety and avoidance of user conflicts. She added that she would like to see development of Front Country Trails strategy, and definitions of right-of-way rules, especially "yield".
- Task Force Member Bensen concurred with Ms. Perkins that the MOU should include just the 3 entities, and stand alone from a separate MOU with volunteer organizations.
- Task Force Member Hickling suggested starting to draft the MOU and bring this to the next Task Force meeting for discussion.

Staff Comments:

- Parks and Recreation Director Rapp stated that the work of the Task Force has been significant, and that each agency has been keeping their respective elected officials informed. It is important to formally take the recommendations to Council and Board of Supervisors for concurrence. In her experience, it takes months of work to iron out specific details. The MOU should include terms, and language to include what resources each agency agrees to commit in order to support the MOU.
- Ms. Zachary stated that staff will return to the Task Force with a schedule for action on how to move forward. She added that the document would likely be similar to the work plan received in March 2007, including a matrix showing recommendations and a schedule for next steps.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

At 12:00 p.m., Task Force Members Longstreet/Perkins that the Task Force meeting be adjourned.

Vote: 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill E. Zachary
Assistant Parks and Recreation Director